

# “B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in some counties

**Diffuse knapweed**  
*Centaurea diffusa*

**Other common names:** White knapweed, spreading knapweed, tumble knapweed

**USDA symbol:** CED13  
**ODA rating:** B



**Distribution in Oregon:** Although widely, diffuse knapweed has limited distribution in Oregon with the northeastern and central areas having the heaviest infestation.

**Introduction:** Diffuse is a member of a large genus of over 400 species, most originating in the Mediterranean region. Diffuse knapweed was first introduced to the Pacific Northwest at the turn of the century as a contaminant in alfalfa seed imported from Turkestan, Turkmenistan or hybrid alfalfa seed from Germany.

**Description:** Diffuse knapweed is a biennial that flowers from midsummer to fall. It grows to 3 feet tall. It is a single-stemmed plant with numerous lateral branches. Flowers are white to rose, sometimes purplish. Flower heads are slender with pointed, fringed bracts and grows out of urn-shaped heads carried as the tips of the many branches. It spreads by seed, aided by the tumbling of windblown mature plants. A single plant can produce approximately 18,000 seeds.

**Impacts:** Diffuse knapweed will form dense stands on any open ground, excluding more desirable forage species. Once established, the necessary extensive control measures are often more expensive than the income potential of the land. It grows under a wide range of conditions, such as riparian areas, sandy river shores, gravel banks, rock outcrops, rangelands and roadsides. There are possible health hazards from absorbing plant juice through bare hand pulling of plants. It is recommended that gloves be worn while handling plants. Diffuse knapweed also supports small mites that bite humans and cause skin irritation

**Biological controls:** Biocontrol agents include several seed feeding flies and weevils, and a root-boring beetle. One beetle species causes serious damage to the vegetative parts of the plants resulting in large reductions of knapweed.

